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ABSTRACT

A longitudinal study followed self-declared transfer students from time of entry at Gainesville College (GC) in fall 1988 through fall 1992, focusing on 4-year transfer rates to the University System of Georgia. Separate transfer rates were calculated for students who earned associate degrees from GC and for business administration majors, and students transferring to private and out-of-state institutions were excluded. Many GC students were in the high-risk category with respect to student persistence and transfer, as evidenced by the following student body characteristics: (1) a significant number of students attended GC part-time and worked while attending college; (2) in fall 1988, 33% of GC students were 22 or older, almost 20% were married, and many had young children; (3) a relatively large number of students entered GC without having taken the prescribed college preparatory curriculum (CPC) in high school, with 45% of the students entering with one or more CPC deficiencies in English, math, science, social science or foreign language; (4) one out of two students was placed in remedial courses; (5) many students were the first in their family to attend college; and (6) over 80% of the transfer students transferred to one of three senior colleges within commuting distance of GC. The transfer rate for all transfer majors was 35.7%; for students earning associate degrees, 74.5%; for business majors, 37.6%, for business majors with associate degrees, 81.6%. Transfer rates increased to 86.5% if calculated for associate degree transfers who earned 60 or more academic credits, and earned a "C" or better in Accounting II, Microeconomics, and Macroeconomics. (KP)

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# Gainesville College to University System Senior Colleges and Universities
# Fall 1988 to Fall 1992

**Dr. John Hamilton**
**Office of Planning and Institutional Research**
**November 30, 1993**

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# Gainesville College to University System Senior Colleges and Universities
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**Dr. John Hamilton**
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## ABSTRACT

This report examines the four-year transfer rates of first-time freshmen transfer majors from Gainesville College to senior colleges and universities in the University System of Georgia. The students were followed from the time of entry during the fall of 1988 through to the fall of 1992. The data indicate that within this four-year time frame 36% of the entering cohort transferred and that the transfer rate increased appreciably to 76% when one considers only those who earned an associate degree. Transfer rates were also calculated for business administration majors. Transfer rates given in this report are undercounts since this longitudinal study was limited to only four years and students who transferred to baccalaureate-granting institutions outside of the University System were not included in the calculations.

## Introduction

Determination of the percentage of entering students who matriculate to baccalaureate-granting senior colleges and universities is possible, but very difficult. Nevertheless, the success of transfer programs as evidenced by the rate at which students move on to senior colleges and universities is an important component of any meaningful assessment process and a reasonable statistic to use for accountability purposes. Transfer rates serve as a gauge of the effectiveness of articulation efforts and mirror faculty values, attitudes, and practices. Despite the importance of transfer education as a major component of the two-year college, few institutions can reliably document this function. Consistent data are hard to find and the gathering and compilation of this data requires sophisticated research expertise. Researchers calculating transfer rates for students entering two-year colleges have had similar results, indicating that approximately 20 to 29 percent (i.e. about 25%) of those students eventually transferred to a four-year college (with or without an associate degree).

A perfect method for accurately calculating transfer rates does not exist. Data gathered to determine these rates are time-bound and do not usually take into account all the variables that influence transfer. The method used herein takes into account student aspirations by following only those with transfer majors, but does not take into account a number of student characteristics that impact the likelihood that a student will transfer within a given time frame. A wide variety of considerations affect transfer rates to include percent of students who attend part-time and at night, average age of students, mix of courses taken and grades received, motivation and persistence, developmental studies needs, and the college-level preparation of entering students. Some students are more academically successful than others and find it easier to integrate fully into a college culture. Some will not finish college or even two or three courses, much less transfer. Moreover, some students take five or more years to transfer, thus a four-year transfer rate would be an undercount for several reasons.

Interpretation of transfer rates from two-year to four-year institutions should be approached with caution. Comparisons between colleges should be avoided since students characteristics, percentage of students in transfer-oriented programs, and college missions vary. A college with a relatively low transfer rate, for example, might be a very successful institution based on other objective criteria.

Furthermore, an analysis of student persistence within a given four-year institution reveals that many of the native students who start do not make it to their junior year.

**Cohort Definition**

A cohort is the unit of analysis. It is important to carefully define the assumptions associated with a given cohort for the sake of scrutiny, interpretation, and repeatability. Transfer rates can vary depending on the cohort definition.

The data presented in this report show four-year transfer rates for first-time freshmen with self-declared transfer majors who started at Gainesville College during the fall of 1988. First-time students are those for whom Gainesville College is the first college they attended as evidenced by a lack of college transfer hours on their transcripts. Some students (about 10% of total enrollment) are in technically-oriented terminal two-year programs, thus not pursuing a transfer degree major. These students were excluded from the cohort used in this study. A separate transfer rate was calculated for this same group of students if they earned an associate degree from Gainesville College. Although not shown, the transfer rate goes up as the number of credit hours earned by students increases. Additionally, a separate study targeted business administration majors. Student motivation and commitment to a transfer degree program make a substantial difference on success as does the impact of the college on the student. The greater the integration of the student with the curriculum and social life of the campus the more likely the student is to persist and transfer. Thus it is illuminating to calculate transfer rates on several different student groups.

Each cohort was followed from the fall of entry to senior colleges and universities in the University System of Georgia until the fall of 1992 inclusive. Students who transferred to private colleges and out-of-state institutions were not included in this study. If a student transferred to a baccalaureate-granting institution in the University System of Georgia within the study period, they were counted as transfers. Data were obtained by querying the System's massive longitudinal SIRS file which is maintained on the Cyber 960 in Athens by the Regents' Office of Information Technology.

Prior studies indicate that few Gainesville College students transfer to private institutions or public institutions out of state. If this study were to track students to private and out-of-state public institutions the transfer rate would likely increase by as much as 5 to 10 percent. The tremendous degree of difficulty in tracking these students precludes them from this study.

**Characteristics of Student Body**

Several characteristics of Gainesville College's student body are germane to an interpretation of transfer rate data. Since the reported transfer rates are for students who entered Gainesville College during the fall of 1988, this quarter is highlighted. The literature supports what is obvious from this student profile: Many Gainesville College students are in the high-risk category with respect to student persistence and transfer.

1. ***Part-time Enrollment and Working While Attending College:*** A significant number of Gainesville College students regularly attend on a part-time basis (taking fewer than 12 credit hours per quarter) and the percentage of part-timers has increased from the fall of 1988 (33% of total enrollment) to the fall of 1992 (41%). Part-time students take longer to complete core curriculum requirements. In addition, part-time students (as well as many full-time students) generally work to finance their education and lifestyle.
2. ***Average Age:*** Thirty-three percent of students enrolled during the fall of 1988 were 22 or more years old. In general, the older the student, the more difficult it is to attend college full-time because of the responsibilities that tend to accumulate with age. Almost twenty percent of the

student body is married and many have young children. Thirty-eight percent of students enrolled during the fall of 1992 were 22 years of age or older.

3. ***High School Curriculum and SAT Average:*** Many students enter Gainesville College without adequate preparation for college-level work. The University System mandates that entering students must have completed a prescribed college preparatory curriculum (CPC) in high school for regular college placement. A relatively large number of students enter Gainesville College without having taken the System's recommended high school curriculum. During the fall of 1988, 45 percent of entering freshmen had one or more CPC deficiencies in the areas of English, math, science, social science, and foreign language. These students are required to satisfy these deficiencies at Gainesville College through exemption tests and/or institutional credit courses that do not count towards graduation. The average total SAT score at Gainesville College in the fall of 1988 was 805 (Fall 1992 - 811) which is below the state average (848) and well below the national average (904) during the same year.
4. ***Development Studies Enrollment:*** The developmental studies curriculum provides an academic path by which marginally prepared students can bring their English, reading, and mathematics skills up to a college standard. Developmental courses carry only institutional credit, which is not applicable to the requirements of graduation. One out of every two entering students places into one or more of our developmental studies offerings. The need to complete remedial courses can delay the time of matriculation for those students who eventually transfer.
5. ***First-Generation Students:*** Many students who enter Gainesville College are the first in their families to attend college. The literature indicates that students from homes in which parents have no educational experience beyond high school often have more difficulty integrating into a college culture than those who come from homes in which one or both parents earned a college degree.
6. ***Transfer Activity to University System Institutions:*** Most students (over 80%) transfer to one of three University System senior colleges and universities. It is significant to note that all of these institutions are within commuting distance of Gainesville College: North Georgia College, The University of Georgia, and Georgia State University. Other System schools that receive significant numbers of Gainesville College students include Southern College of Technology, Kennesaw State College, Georgia Southern University, and the Medical College of Georgia. The comparatively few students who transfer to colleges and universities out of the University System of Georgia were not included in the cohort definition, hence were not in the calculated transfer rates.

**Transfer Rates**

**Calculation of Transfer Rate:** The transfer rates given are the number of students who entered Gainesville College during the fall of 1988 and who transferred to System baccalaureate-granting institutions by the fall of 1992 inclusive divided by the total number of students in the entering group. Students who transferred to two or more System units over the course of the study were only counted once. Students who might have transferred to a private institution or an out-of-state institution were not followed. Previous studies indicate that this latter consideration means that the transfer rates given are an undercount.

**Overall Transfer Rates:** The four-year transfer rates are summarized in the accompanying table. The four-year rate for all students with a transfer major is 36%. The four-year transfer rate for those transfer major students who earned an associate degree was 75%. The greater the number of core curriculum credits earned, the greater the College impact and the greater the student motivation to complete their degree program.

**Transfer Rates of Business Administration Majors:** Since more students at Gainesville College major in business administration (about 29% of the fall of 1988 cohort) than any other degree program, several transfer rates specific to these students were also calculated. The data indicate that business administration majors tend to transfer at four-year rates that exceed those of the general student body. Within four years of entering Gainesville College, Business Administration majors transfer at a rate of 38%. Business Administration majors with associate degrees transfer at a rate of 82%. These rates increase if one calculates these same rates for only those students who met the following criteria: students earned 60 or more academic credits at Gainesville College with a 'C' of better in Accounting II, Microeconomics, and Macroeconomics. The transfer rate is 76% for all business majors who have met this criteria and 87% for those with associate degrees and who have met this criteria.

## Four-Year Transfer Rates
## First-Time Freshmen Transfer Majors
## Gainesville College to University System Senior Colleges and Universities
## Fall 1988 to Fall 1992

| | *Four-Year Transfer Rate Fall 88 to Fall 92* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group Description** | **N** | **Transfers** | **Transfer Rate** |
| **All transfer majors** | 602 | 215 | 35.7 |
| **All transfer majors with associate degrees** | 137 | 102 | 74.5 |
| **All Business Administration majors** | 173 | 65 | 37.6 |
| **Business Administration majors with criteria below*** | 49 | 37 | 75.5 |
| **Business Administration majors with associate degrees** | 49 | 40 | 81.6 |
| **Business Administration majors with associate degrees and criteria below*** | 37 | 32 | 86.5 |

**Additional criteria for Groups 2 and 4*
*60 or more academic credits at Gainesville College with a 'C' or better in Accounting II, Microeconomics, and Macroeconomics*



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